

REMARKS

I. Introduction

With the cancellation of claims 23 and 31 without prejudice herein, claims 21, 22, 24 to 30 and 32 to 44 are pending in the present application. In view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks, it is respectfully submitted that all of the presently pending claims are allowable, and reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Applicant notes with appreciation the acknowledgment that the previously-submitted Information Disclosure Statement, Form PTO-1449 and references have been considered.

II. Rejection of Claim 23 and 31 Under 35 U.S.C. §112

Claims 23 and 31 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the written description requirement. Specifically, the Office Action contends that "[t]he specification as originally filed does not provide support for the connector 300 being reinforced." Office Action at page 2. Applicant respectfully disagrees. However, for the purpose of expediting the allowance of this application, and for the purpose of expediting the granting of Applicant's previously filed Request for Interference in connection with this application, claims 23 and 31 have been canceled without prejudice herein. Therefore, the rejection of claims 23 and 31 are moot.

III. Request For Interference

Applicants respectfully request that, since it is believed that all of the pending claims of the present application are now in condition for allowance, an Interference be declared between claims 21, 22, 24 to 30 and 32 to 44 of the present application and claims 1 to 39 of U.S. Patent No. 6,386,199, for the reasons set forth in Applicant's previously filed "Amendment and Request for Interference" filed in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office on May 13, 2003.

IV. Conclusion

Applicants respectfully submit that all of the pending claims of the present application are now in condition for allowance. Prompt reconsideration and

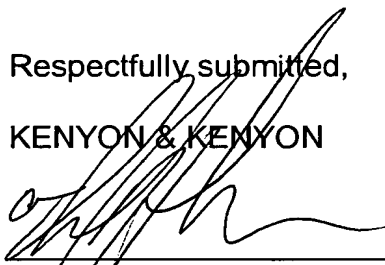
allowance of the present application, and the declaration of the above-referenced interference proceeding, are therefore earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

KENYON & KENYON

Dated: August 11, 2003

By:


Thomas C. Hughes
Reg. No. 42,674

One Broadway
New York, New York 10004
(212) 425-7200

CUSTOMER NO. 26646



26646

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